

Friis, John

From: Jodie Keenan [jodie.keenan@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2009 11:57 PM
To: Friis, John
Subject: HB6666, Section 5

Dear Sir,

My name is Jodie Keenan, and I attended ACES ECA from 2001-2004; spending two years in the Visual Arts Department and one year in Creative Writing. I cant begin to describe what that institute has done for me both personally and professionally, and how appalled I am by the idea that this fine institution is now being threatened.

To begin with, after high school I opted to earn a bachelor of fine arts degree. The time I spent in the Visual Arts Department not only helped me to build a portfolio that was exponentially stronger and more diverse then many of my peers, it also provided a valuable asset on my college applications, and even provided me with exceptional mentors who were willing to write letters of recommendation for me, and as a result I got into nearly every college that I applied to.

Furthermore, once I started attending Maine College of Art, I found that I was already fairly competent in the many of the basic techniques that all freshmen had to learn. All through grade school, middle school, my freshmen year of high school (pre-ECA), and numerous private art classes, I was NEVER challenged or motivated as greatly as I was at ACES ECA. Many times schools have honors and AP classes for students who excel beyond their peers, but no normal school that I know of can say the same about art, writing, music, acting, or dance. And so those of us who were able to understand and complete the creative assignments we were given with ease were simply left to stagnate. While its understandable that students who struggle with assignments require more attention and explanation, in any other field of study students who excel are continuously challenged and encouraged to make themselves better and take themselves further, not simply told, Thats good enough, heres your A. For many of us ACES ECA was the place where we were truly motivated, truly challenged, and truly encouraged for the first time.

I also noticed that my path through junior college was a great deal smoother than many of the other students because I had a clear direction from the very start. My major was New Media. I could have declared it the very first semester of college despite the fact that I didnt have to until my fourth. I was able to concentrate many of my elective classes into video, photography, and digital arts and get many requirements that many other students had to stay on extra semesters or over the summer to complete because I didnt flounder about wondering what I wanted to do. While Attending ACES ECA I was able to take very specialized classes such as video, animation, and photography that my regular high school, and, for that matter, most normal high schools do not offer, ergo I was able to go to college focused, and with a more then rudimentary understanding of the field that I have chosen to pursue.

In addition to the incalculably valuable knowledge and experience I gained in my particular artistic niche, I was able to expand my knowledge, understanding, and creativity in several other fields as well. While I did not choose to major in English, I have a massive passion for creative writing, which has certainly come in handy when its come to writing screenplays for video projects. While my writing had inauspicious enough roots in my melodramatic teenage poetry and Dungeons and Dragons fan fiction, the year I spent in the ECA Creative Writing department helped me to grow by leaps and bounds, expanding my horizons for the slightly more dignified personal projects that I pursue to this day, to giving my film and animation projects an edge that many other majors in my department lacked.

I know I dont need to tell you that many high school students, particularly the slow and clumsy ones such as myself, dread gym class like the bubonic plague. ACES ECA gave me the opportunity to not only escape that particular torture, but to discover Aikido, a martial art that I practice to this very day

(and with barely any clumsiness, I might add).

In addition to all of the above listed benefits I received from attending ACES ECA, I don't think that I can stress enough how wonderful it was for me on a personal level. While I'm certainly no socialite, I'm not exactly an untouchable either. Still, I've never been able to make so many friends so easily as I did at ACES ECA, nor have I had such lasting friendships as the ones I forged there.

I think that teenagers are pretty melodramatic generally speaking (I know I was!), so I'm not going to say that high school is anything like what you see in teen-dramas and what not. To me, however, my sending school, while certainly nothing of a hell on earth (except for gym class), could fall into the category of purgatory easily enough. Everybody seemed to act the way they felt they were supposed to act. Everything seemed to be a bland and tasteless beige. ACES ECA, on the other hand, was the antithesis. It was color and life and excitement. As far as I'm concerned the teachers were all incredibly competent, qualified, and genuinely enthusiastic. The classes were, as I've already stated, diverse and enlightening. The students seemed to feel much safer and more comfortable with themselves and each other than I'd ever seen until I started college.

To close ACES ECA would be more than just a tragedy, as far as I'm concerned. It would be a crime. It would rob countless individuals of more than their present happiness, it would deny them the boundlessly great futures that this fine institute may have helped them to achieve.

Thank you,
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